

Sustainable Energy Committee - Minutes

Conference Room G - Town Hall

Friday, April 1, 2011

7:45 am – 9:00 am

Committee Members Present:

Suzy Littlefield, Chair
Richard Joyce, Beth DeSombre
Christopher Ketchen
Beth DeSombre
Scott Bender
Robert Cooper
Ellen Korpi
Molly Fairchild, Sustainable Energy Coordinator

Meeting called to order at 7:45 am

Citizen Speak –no one present

Approved Minutes from 3//18/11

Community Outreach & Behavior Change

Ms DeSombre presented a summary of concepts from the course she teaches at Wellesley College on changing environmental behavior, which is commonly known as - ***Why good people do bad environmental things***. People have good reasons for not doing the right thing. By changing the behavior ... then the belief changes, with understanding. When people engage in environmental behaviors like recycling – they become interested in doing the right thing. The mere fact of doing it changes the way they think – they become environmentalists. So it is better to focus on the behavior, and not try to change their environmental thinking, directly. As the price of gas goes up, it helps to change people to the right behavior. The two main things that drive behavior are **incentives and praise**. Incentives work in strange ways. Expand the rebate program because this is an entrée for many to begin thinking about energy savings. When you do the right thing – it makes you more likely to change your thinking about environmental issues. Another big piece is to make the default be what you want it to be. Force the need to take action to opt out – instead of creating the hurdle to sign up.

Collective action problems – it would be great if everyone else saved energy and I did not have to. Size issue – we need to know that we are important. It matters if I am there – feels important in a small group – need to feel that my behavior is important enough but also feel that the effect of the group is important enough – big enough. If we as the Town of Wellesley is are important enough that our change collectively matters enough that it is worthwhile enough. Do I think that we collectively are going to be able accomplish something. What does the community think of me? In international work there is no international regulatory system – so shaming is also used. If my energy use was visible on line – I would change much more – Shaming and praising. Knowing what your neighbors are doing is very important. **Community norms**. Recycling center gives us this, so does the Voluntary Renewable Energy Program VREP – participation in our Town and comparison to other towns. People want to fit into the community norms. One of the things that changes behavior is a “smiley face” on the bill – “better than you used to do” is the best, not norm. I did better this month than last year. Quick positive or negative reinforcement is most effective. Need to get the attention of those that are not trying to notice. Information needs to be easily accessible and understandable in a quick moment. It is not that we are bad people we just don’t have the right incentive to help us do the right thing.

For example, double side print – just do not know how. Set as default. Someone came and helped me do it – even though I was not asking. For example, Pay-as-you-throw (PAYT) –psychologically it changes things – it is not the actual cost. Don't need to have perfect compliance.

Ms Fairchild offered to follow-up with a letter to RDF/DPW regarding PAYT with Messages from Ms DeSombre's discussion.

The committee discussed the Refund of 5-cents for reusable bags. This would be better if it was a 5-cent charge for plastic bags. This is complicated by 2 things -Roche Brothers – 5 cents option to give to a charity. Whole Foods indicated that it is a Corporate-level decision, as was the decision to only offer brown-paper bags.

Launch of SustainableWellesley

Seminars

Mr Bender reported that about 40 people attended the recent seminar for Cub Scouts that he presented on energy efficiency and the environment. He also sent out a survey as a follow-up. He will also has been invited to present the seminar for a 2nd grade class at Sprague.

Ms DeSombre will explore having WC sports center electric bicycle and use by Sustainable Wellesley for events as demos, to demonstrate the generation of electricity by peddling a bicycle with CFL vs incandescent bulb.

GreenScene – e-newsletter

Mr Bender also reported that a Survey was sent out in the recent GreenScene asking whether people economic, political or environmental concerns drive their action to be more sustainable, and whether they currently participate in the MLP's Voluntary Renewable Energy Program.

Ms DeSombre cautioned that how people answer may not be accurate – as it may actually be incentive driven “ I think this is the right answer”.

Logo and Banner.

Mr Bender reported that the banner can be displayed for 2 weeks in town center and at the RDF – something to state the Launch of SustainableWellesley - 10% reduction by 2013. Need to identify someone to help with graphic design.

Mr Joyce offered that the MLP will fund the banner.

Sustainable Wellesley.com Website and Calendar

Ms Fairchild will communicate with the departments and committees to get regular updates from them for the SustainableWellesley calendar, and expand email list.

Mr Bender and Ms Fairchild will meet with Janet Bowser to discuss collaboration for community outreach, emails and the SustainableWellesley.com Website calendar of events.

Ms Littlefield will get a letter into school email.

GroundedPower

Mr Joyce reported that the MLP is considering continuing GP for another year, but is also looking at other programs.

Voluntary Renewable Energy Program (VREP) (Dick)

Mr Joyce reported that following the recent insert on VREP in the Utility bill – we are now close to 700 participants. When the MLP sends the VREP refund by mail to all VREP participants in April, the letter will be another opportunity to encourage participation. We need to provide a clearer statement of how participation in VREP buying RECs to supplement miller falls and spruce mountain renewable purchases is helping increase renewable energy in New England.

Summer Cooling Initiative

Ms DeSombre indicated that a Babson marketing professor would be interested in helping.

MLP will do a mailing

Upcoming SEC Outreach Events

League of Women Voters luncheon April 7th

Sustainable Interfaith group – April 28th

Sprague SEED-fest –May 1

Emissions and Energy Data 2007- 2010

Ms Fairchild reported that the Report for Town Meeting Members will be sent by email in May.

Mr Joyce recommended the Street lights be reported separately from the other municipal electric data, as the 26% reduction from the 2007 baseline is recognized, and \$100,000 annual savings.

Meeting Adjourned 9:00 a.m.

Next Meeting: April 15, 2011